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ELECTORAL VIOLENCE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

The nightmare usually associated with elections prompted this paper which examines the heterogeneous issues associated with electoral violence in Nigeria. The country with her multi-ethnic and cultural s is faced with myriads of problems when it comes to the issue of elections. The paper considered political violence a preliminary problem that often led to electoral violence. Similarly, different dimensions of electoral violence are highlighted with probable causes including poverty and unemployment, ineffective security, culture of impunity, weak penalties, small arms proliferation as well as weak and corrupt government. Patterns of electoral violence were discussed and the expected roles of the law enforcement agencies.

Keywords: electoral violence, causes, patterns, law enforcement,

Introduction

There are overlapping regional, religious, and racial divisions in Nigeria. These divisions—between Islam and Christianity, between ethnic groups, and between the northern and southern sections of the country—often overlap, and they have occasionally resulted in sectarian violence. This has been the case, particularly in its geographic centre and the Niger Delta region. Elections in Nigeria and around the world are largely debated concerning the procedures used to elect, nominate, or impose leaders. In Nigeria, violence during elections has historically been a problem. What is unusual, it seems, is the range and pervasiveness of the dependence on it for canvassing electorates and winning elections. Since violence has nearly always accompanied Nigerian elections since 1993, the country's political and electoral systems have learned to expect it regularly. Election violence has become a regular occurrence in Nigerian politics as a result. Election-related violence can manifest itself in a variety of ways during the three (3) stages before, during, and after an election. This involves murder, assassination, and acts of violence such as burning, stuffing, and stealing ballot boxes. This resulted in more than 11,000 fatalities in Nigeria between 1993 and 2006.

Unfortunately, since Nigeria's restoration to democracy in 1999, there has always been election violence there. Local peacebuilding efforts have greatly increased security in conflict-prone states like Kaduna, and more recent efforts are underway in Plateau State, which is rife with instability, but there is a very high risk of electoral violence nationally. Many issues that contribute to election violence remain unsolved and will worsen if emotions surrounding the 2011 elections continue to escalate. Whether planned or unexpected, election-related disputes are notable because they reflect anger over complex social and economic problems. Nigeria's problems include rivalry for resources, mistrust within and among communities, unemployment, and resentment over the enormous number of dishonest politicians who show little regard for the rule of law or due process. Election seasons are more likely to result in violent conflict as underlying social and economic worries collide with expectations and fears of change. This is particularly true in countries like Nigeria, where protracted conflicts are exacerbated by persistent instability, poor leadership, inter-communal conflict, gang-related violence, and sponsored violence. Money rewards, unresolved hatred, and opportunistic urges for revenge can all be powerful motivators for violence. The fact that there is fresh outrage over election injustices occurring under the watchful eye of a government still viewed as bearing little or no responsibility for electoral crimes is concerning.

Methods

Election violence's particular traits

In an effort to purposefully influence the process and outcomes of elections, political players undertake coercive acts against people, property, and infrastructure (Bekoe, 2012). It can take place at any time during the electoral cycle, including the announcement of elections, party primaries, and voter registration (Taylor, Pevehouse, & Straus, 2017; Staniland, 2014). It can be supported by both state and non-state actors. Although this perspective has the deliberate use of violence at its core, other, complementary views also exist, as will be covered below. Election violence can take on a variety of shapes and manifest in a wide range of ways, but its coercive aspect unites the concept. Although research from the African context suggests that harassment and intimidation are more common than lethal violence, lethal violence is typically better covered and less likely to be underreported in media-based sources that form the basis of many cross-country sources capturing electoral violence (Straus & Taylor, 2012, p. 17–18, 24). Election-related violence, however, can cause significant harm and lead to a descent into civil war (Christensen & Utas, 2008; Ron, 2001).

Findings and Discussions

Political and electoral violence contrasted numerous abuses and misinterpretations have been made of the ideas of political and electoral violence, which, through time, have been ingrained in our democratic ethos and narrative. Despite the fact that there are points of convergence and divergence, it is crucial to specify the terms' definitions to improve their use in analyses that employ them. Comparatively speaking, political violence, which can happen in several political systems that aren't always democratic, has a wider spectrum than electoral violence. Political violence, for instance, might be defined as "the use of a threat or physical act carried out by an individual or individuals inside a political system against an individual or individuals and/or property." Election season may not be the time for it to occur; there is

no specific time. Political violence often has a connection to the electoral process, but it also occurs in conflicts over gaining and maintaining power.

Political violence takes place in a struggle to gain and hold onto power. On the other hand, electoral violence is among the major issues in many democratic cultures. Electoral violence could be defined as election-related crises that employ force or coercion to alter voter behavior or voting patterns or even to annul election results in favor of a particular individual, organization, or political party. Any act of violence (damage) or threat against a voter, any property connected to the process, or anyone disputing any element of the political or electoral process during an election could be categorized as such. Before the election, there could be election-related violence, including acts that undermine democracy and its participants, campaigning, and voting itself. Such violence might also be a post-election phenomenon resulting from manipulation, disapproval, democratic transition, or the switch from one form of government to another. According to academics, there are several types of electoral violence. Homicide, arson, kidnapping, assault, forcible seizure, and the destruction of voting materials are some of them. To influence election outcomes or stop elected politicians from solidifying their authority after winning elections, people and organizations engage in all of these activities. While electoral violence only makes up a small percentage of political violence, political violence can also involve electoral violence.

Findings

Categories of Election-related Violence

Physical assaults on individuals occur during campaigns, elections, and the results-announcement process. These physical assaults can occur in a variety of ways, including (a) killing of political rivals (b) Destroying public or oppositional property (c) shooting them and murdering them. (d) Security guards intimidating political opponents, making arrests, and forcing crowds to disperse. (e) killing and hostage-taking, infrastructure bombing (f) Thugs obstruct political and campaign rallies brutally. Destruction of voting agents' records and ballot boxes. Every battle is free. Orders to shoot on sight incite psychological violence among voters. terror motivated by politics that keeps people from voting or participating in politics. b. publication or transmission of derogatory, humiliating, or abusive propaganda; c. Political indifference is a result of security agents intimidating and harassing opponents of the ruling party or regime. Violent threats made over the phone, by SMS, etc. Structural violence refers to the use of government force to prevent citizens from voting, registering to vote, or accessing certain national facilities. a. regulations and procedures that omit b. Unjust opportunities for political parties and candidates c. intentionally altering the dates, times, or places of an event for the benefit of another d. The locations of polling booths and the borders of election constituencies are partisan. e. exorbitant fees for gathering nominations for parties f. Without a cost-free campaign restriction imposed on voters; h. reliance on strength and wealth rather than virtue and talent i. leveraging the incumbent factor to favor some candidates more than others; j. disclosure of fabricated or misleading findings; k. protracted election results announcement; l. absence of enough votes cast. Discriminatory laws and policies n. Police and other security personnel's partisan behavior Election officials failing to arrive at a polling location on time (paraphrased from Nwolise, 2007)

The role of law enforcement in averting violence during Elections

It's critical to emphasize that everyone has the right to personal freedom and that it is illegal to arrest or detain any voter at random during an election. The following situations, however, may allow for arrest and detention if law enforcement officers on election duty have no other legal options for investigating electoral violations stated by INEC: The purpose of any detention should be explained to the detainee in a language that they are familiar with. b. An accusation of a crime must be made against anyone who is arrested in conformity with the law and the Constitution. c. Anyone who is being held is allowed to remain silent or refuse to answer questions until they have requested a lawyer or another person of their choosing. d. It is necessary to quickly inform the person's family of his arrest location and current detention facility.

e. Any detainee has the right to a prompt trial or release. f. No detainee shall be subjected to torture, threats of violence, or any other kind of cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment or punishment. g. Separating children from adults and women from men is necessary in prison. h. Detainees have access to the outside world, family members, and private one-on-one conversations with attorneys. i. The housing of detainees must be humane and safeguard their health and dignity. They also need to have access to enough food, water, clothing, medical care, exercise opportunities, and personal hygiene supplies. j. It is unlawful to coerce someone who is in detention into confessing or in any other way naming someone else. All measures adopted to recover control during civil unrest should (a) protect people's rights to order. (b) The restoration of law and order during elections shall be carried out without discrimination; civil unrest should only be suppressed during elections if it is necessary to uphold the rights and freedoms of other voters and to maintain public order.

(c) When regulating public unrest, law enforcement officials are not permitted to make any exceptions to the prohibitions against torture and the right to life. (d) Those who have been the victims of violations of human rights or violations relating to elections should have prompt access to the judicial system, be aware of their legal entitlements to protection and compensation, and receive the necessary legal, material, medical, and social support. (e) Victims should have the chance to voice their thoughts and feelings on any issues that might affect their interests. Electoral violence as well as other forms of violence

The institutional arrangements that surround elections have an impact on election-related violence, which sets it apart from other forms of organized violence. The actors, norms, and institutions that make up the electoral system have an impact on the causes, timing, and targets of election-related violence. Since there was no election, electoral violence "would not have occurred or would at least have presented itself differently," according to Fjelde and Hoglund (2016).

Violence and Manipulation in elections

Election-related violence is yet another unusual example of electoral manipulation. Similar to other forms of electoral malpractice, including meddling with the registration process, buying votes, or electoral fraud, election violence aims to taint the electoral process (Birch, 2011; Lehoucq, 2003). But there are distinctive qualities that make electoral violence unique. First, unlike the psychological effects that one would expect from fraud, vote-buying, and other forms of election manipulation, violence has different psychological effects on individuals and

society. Violence instills a fear of suffering physical harm and actual death. Second, the costs associated with instigating violence are greater than those associated with other sorts of deceptive strategies. It is unlikely to go undetected by international observers, who are more likely to condemn electoral violence than, say, vote-buying. If they do, it might lead to a reduction in donor financing and credibility on the global stage. Trends in electoral violence in Nigeria

Before going into detail about the specific variables that sparked bloodshed during the 2011 election season, it's crucial to recognize that Nigeria's electoral violence follows a predictable pattern. Conflicts during elections frequently fall into one of four categories: interparty conflict, intraparty conflict, communal unrest, and violence during elections. Intraparty discord

Just before the party primary is the most likely period for conflict between party groups to break out, and the more violent it is, the more influential the party is politically. One prominent observer noted that "when a party maintains power, the level of strife inside that party tends to be larger." In many parts of the country, winning the election is guaranteed if you are running on the PDP ticket. Competition for PDP nominations is frequently accompanied by violent conflict, from the state houses of assembly to the governorships. Ordinary voters are rarely directly harmed by this kind of violence, which is more frequently opposed by elite-sponsored militias or targeted at the PDP.

Interparty Conflict

The recent post-election violence in Rivers State is a prime example of this, as there had been very little voting and voter intimidation was a major issue, as were missing ballots or closed polling places. Violence connected to elections

Violence associated with elections appears to follow a pattern that is largely predictable around important electoral events. Even the basic process of choosing party delegates can be tense. There is a pervasive feeling of unease as a result of this, the pressure to make headlines that the new INEC chair is under to effectively manage voter registration, and the last-minute ambiguity around the exact dates for the 2011 elections. As previous elections have shown, the month before an election is a high-risk period and the likelihood of violence increases as the election draws near. As Human Rights Watch observers noted during the 2007 elections in the states of Ekiti, Rivers, and Anambra, violence against journalists, political hopefuls, and their families, as well as regular voters, has historically contaminated election days. Violence increased by roughly 42% between March 2007 and April 2007. As a result of the seemingly unbelievable news that "the PDP had swept the state's gubernatorial polls," opposition supporters reportedly set government buildings on fire in Katsina. 24 Communal Unrest Meanwhile, the announcement of allegedly rigged election results might provoke ferocious responses.

Election-related tensions frequently exacerbate already-existing communal conflicts, which in Nigeria may include hostility between ethnoreligious groups, competition over regional resources, and rebellious unrest in response to corrupt and failing leadership. Other areas of concern include the historically unstable east, which includes states like Anambra, and the increasingly unrestful parts of the north, such as Borno. The Plateau State in lower north-central Nigeria and the Niger Delta are two areas of particular concern. One representative newspaper claims that electoral violence and fraud have an "ugly past" in Anambra.

Discussions

Aspects or Categories of Election-Related Violence

Physical assaults on individuals occur during campaigns, elections, and the results-announcement process. These physical assaults can occur in a variety of ways, including:

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Conclusion

Election violence can be associated with economic hardship and political exclusion when there isn't level playing fields across political parties. As a result, it is essential to put into action the constitutional convention's recommendations, which called for an inclusive and equitable development that cuts across ethnic boundaries. As a result, the idea of "ethnic dictatorship" will lose its value, and various religious figures should view it as their duty to provide their adherents with the appropriate political "vaccine" to foster stronger societal cohesion. Religion should advance beyond its alleged function of bringing about salvation by looking at societal viewpoints. Additionally, the problem of hate speech and other statements that can inspire violence in our politics needs to be avoided with sanctions that are commensurate with the outcomes of such speeches and actions. When a leader or someone running for office uses the adage "If not me, no one else" or "If I fail, no one will go there or succeed," it can be extremely motivating. The government, decision-makers, and law enforcement personnel should be on the lookout for such persons for early prosecution

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